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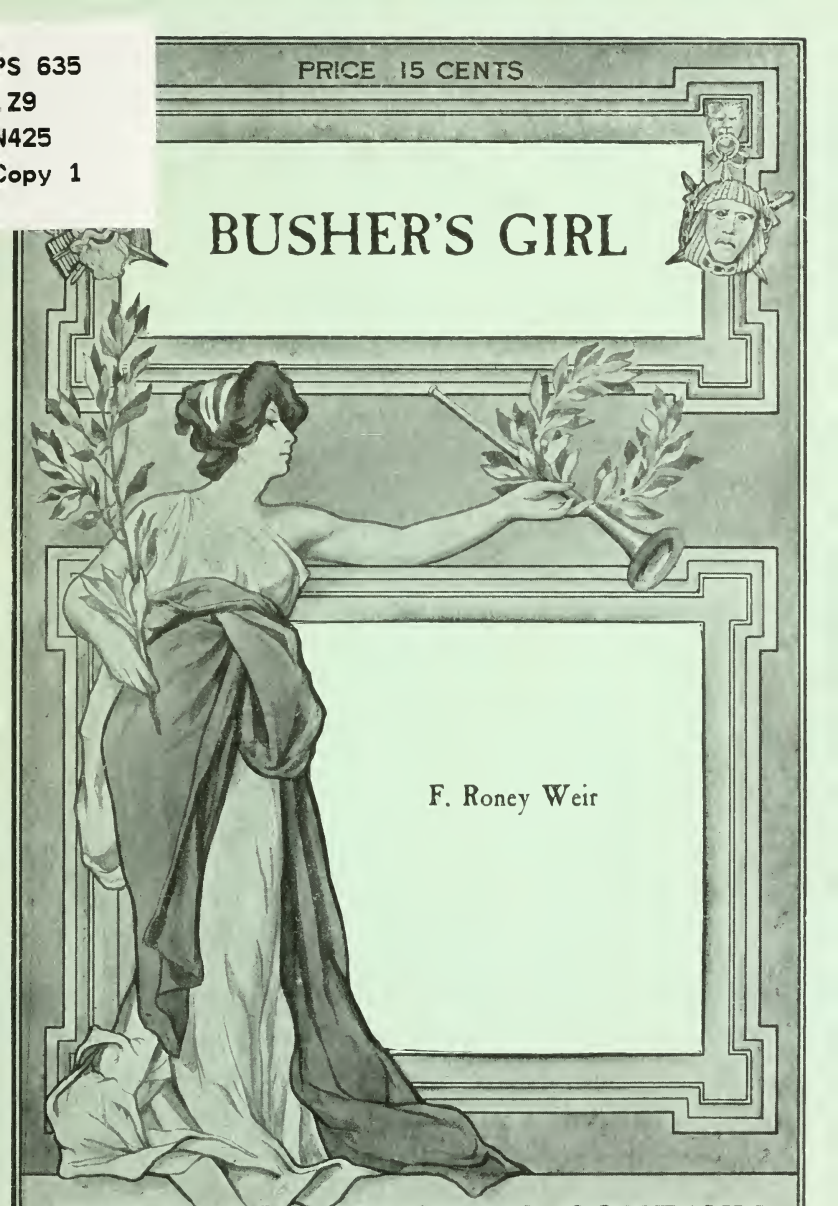
BUSHER'S GIRL



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THE PENN PUBLISHING COMPANY
PHILADELPHIA

Busher's Girl

A Comedy in Three Acts

By
F. RONEY WEIR

PHILADELPHIA
THE PENN PUBLISHING COMPANY
1915

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No. 1

Busher's Girl

Busher's Girl

CHARACTERS

MR. PRIDE . . . . . *of Chicago*
HELEN PRIDE . . . . . *his daughter*
PETUNIA BUSHER, . *native of Slab County, Washington*
DOCTOR (*and justice of the peace*) JAMES BUSHER.
LAMBERT AMES . *a young mill worker and rancher*
MRS. BUSHER, *and the ten Busher children* (*may be omitted*)

TIME.—One hour and a half.

STORY OF THE PLAY

Mr. Pride of Chicago has lost his money and, with his mercenary daughter Helen, is living in a Western lumber camp. Helen amuses herself with Lambert Ames, a small rancher and mill worker. Petunia, daughter of lazy Jim Busher, is a girl with a heart of gold, and secretly loves Ames, but is too proud to try to win him. He inherits a fortune, and Helen determines to marry him. Petunia is going away, but Lambert hears something that makes him think she loves him. He pretends to be poor and wounded. Helen deserts him promptly, but Petunia comes back to nurse him, and is glad at last to be Ames' wife instead of "just Busher's girl."

COSTUMES, ETC.

PRIDE. Fifty. First act, smart business suit. Second act, soft shirt and trousers. Thirt act, business suit.

HELEN. Twenty-three. First act, street suit, hat and gloves. Second act, simple but stylish house dress. Third act, street suit.

PETUNIA. Twenty. First and second acts, plain but pretty gingham working dress. Third act, plain business suit and small hat.

BUSHER. Fifty. Overalls and collarless shirt. Old felt hat.

LAMBERT. Twenty-five. Well-dressed young ranchman, in trousers and clean cotton shirt. Heavy boots.

PROPERTIES

PETUNIA. Dog chain, dish-cloth, towels, frying-pan.

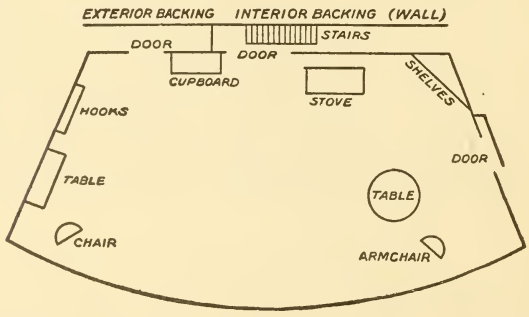
AMES. Pitcher of milk and saucer, plate of bone, pocket knife, sheet from cot, marriage license.

BUSHER. Medicine bottles of all sizes and colors, several miscellaneous packages, letter, newspaper bundle containing a pair of old boots, pipe.

HELEN. Cards.

PRIDE. Two letters.

SCENE PLOT



SCENE.—Acts I, II and III. Kitchen of Lambert Ames; a plain, comfortable room, stove up L., tables R.

and L. Cupboard up C. Shelves up L. Hooks for clothing at R. Entrances up C., up R. and at L. A stepladder with side covered with wood. Cloth or pasteboard will suffice for stairs shown at door C. Only two or three steps need be in sight.

Busher's Girl

ACT I

SCENE.—*Interior of* AMES' *house. Door,* L. *Door in back wall,* R. *Stair door,* C.; *cook-stove to left of stair door. Kitchen table,* L. *Chair down* R. *Small table and hooks for hanging clothing,* R. *Table,* L., *and stove covered with kettles and dishes in disorder.*

(*At rise of curtain, room is empty. Knocking at door up* R. *which opens slowly to admit* MR. PRIDE *and* HELEN PRIDE.)

PRIDE. Hello, the house! Hello!

(*Knocks on inside of door.*)

HELEN (*going* L., *looking about disdainfully*). Nobody at home but the kitchen fire and that's going out. Does the young man live here alone?

PRIDE (*closing door and coming down* R.). Yes. His sister was married last week and has gone East.

HELEN (*coming down* L.). And are you sure this is the Ames house, papa?

PRIDE. Quite sure. It is the only two-story house in the neighborhood. "The house with stairs," the natives call it. It is supposed to be quite a mansion.

HELEN (*laughing sarcastically*). And to think that we should come down to living in such a—sty as this!

PRIDE (*down* R.). You have yourself to thank for it. And besides, we may not get a chance to live in this house. The fellow was not at all keen about renting to us. It's this house or a two-roomed shack, and as I said before, you have nobody but yourself to thank that we were driven to the coast. If you had accepted Shockton his money would have enabled me to pull through.

HELEN. But Mr. Shockton was such a horrible old creature, papa!

PRIDE. You wouldn't have thought so if there had been no Harold Lamar with which to compare him!

HELEN. How was I to know? I, so young—so—so ignorant. But I am sorry now, papa, and I promise to marry any rich man you will produce to get you and myself out of this horror! (*Shudders.*)

PRIDE. Old Shocktons are not to be picked up in a Northwest shingle-camp. At least not in a one-horse one like this. People about here are as poor as poverty. I shall be rated a bloated aristocrat because I own an interest in this old rattletrap of a shingle mill. The income of the thing will amount to nothing this first year—perhaps never will amount to anything unless I can knock the business into some sort of shape.

(*Sits* R. *and begins to figure upon a scrap of paper which he takes from his pocket.*)

HELEN (*moving about the room*). I presume we really haven't any business in this house when its owner is away from home. Who is he?

PRIDE. A small rancher who sometimes works in the mill.

HELEN. It's a horrid place. Where are the stairs?

(*Opens door to the right of stove disclosing a flight of very perpendicular stairs with very narrow treads; a step-ladder may be made to serve for this. Turns to her father and they both laugh. She closes the door quickly at sound of a dog fight without and a girl's voice heard trying to quell the fight. Door up* R. *flies open and* PETUNIA BUSHER *appears, hanging to the end of a jerking chain and yelling to an unseen dog.*)

PETUNIA. Go home! Go home, I tell you! (*Then over her shoulder through the door.*) Lammie! Lammie Ames, come out here and tie up your dog! The hound tagged me over and treed your cat and then Shep pitched in, and I've had a time, I tell you! Come along out and tie up Shep. (*Catches sight of* HELEN.) Hully gracious, Lammie's got company.—Is Mr. Ames in there anywhere?

PRIDE. No, he's not in. We have been waiting here for him for some time.

(PETUNIA *loses hold on chain and it is heard clanking away into the distance.*)

PETUNIA. There he goes! Darn that Shep dog! (*Enters, but returns to gaze out of door.*) But I guess the hound has got start enough to make home before Shep can ketch him. If Shep gits to foolin' round our house maw'll heave a shingle-bolt at him.

(*Comes in, hangs up her battered hat, rolls up her sleeves, goes to shelves up* L. *and gets dish-cloth.*)

HELEN (*up* C.). Are you going to wash the dishes?

PETUNIA. Yep.

HELEN (*in an amused and superior manner*). Does the owner of this house hire you to do his work?

PETUNIA (*taking hot water from stove and pouring into pan, etc.*). He hires maw, but maw got kicked by a mule to-day an' it busted her up so she can't navigate.

HELEN. Oh, how unfortunate. What was your mother doing with a mule?

PETUNIA. We're a-breakin' the twenty.

HELEN. You have no father, then?

(PETUNIA *at back of table, facing audience, washes dishes. She gives* HELEN *a scornful glance.*)

PETUNIA. I should say I have! Dr. James Busher, district of the peace for Slab County, is my father.

(*Clatters among the dishes.*)

HELEN. Why doesn't your father do the ploughing?

PETUNIA. When it comes to eatin' an' bossin' fathers are right there with the goods, but when it comes to ploughin' the patch with a borried mule give me a woman every time. (*Puts in more dishes.*)

PRIDE. I think I will walk down toward the mill. I may meet Mr.—eh—the young man who owns the house.

(*Exit.*)

PETUNIA. That your husband?

HELEN. No, my father. Do you think it would be right for a young person like me to be married to an old man like that? (*Sits,* R.)

PETUNIA. Well, I should say nit! Nor a young one

either. (*She rolls up a dish-towel and tosses it at* HELEN.) While you're a-settin' you might as well dry the dishes for me. There's a lot to do here, an' I've got to hike home to git supper for paw an' the boys.

HELEN (*dodging towel, then picking it up, brushing it gingerly and wiping dishes*). You have brothers, then?

PETUNIA. Yep; four.

HELEN (*putting wiped dishes on table,* R.). How nice. And you are the only girl?

PETUNIA. Well, now, not exactly.

HELEN. It must be delightful to have a sister.

PETUNIA. Sister!

HELEN. You have more than one?

PETUNIA. Well, now, I should think so.

HELEN. How many have you?

PETUNIA. Let's see-e-e-e; there's Lily, Anne, Renie, Tote, Louise an' Nancy—you may put the dishes in that there cupboard by the door.

HELEN (*putting dishes away as directed*). What are those shelves for? (*Indicates shelves near stove.*)

PETUNIA. Those are to dry your overalls on an' keep your tobacco an' flea-powder where you can find 'em.

HELEN. And you don't approve of men?

PETUNIA. Well, I should say me for the negative! Do you?

HELEN. Oh, really, it depends on the man. (*Dreamily.*) If he is big, and handsome and young, blue-eyed and tender, and has a lot of money ——

PETUNIA (*reflectively*). Lammie Ames is all them—except one.

HELEN. And that "one" is sure to be the indispensable requisite.

PETUNIA. He ain't rich, if that's what you mean.

HELEN (*smiling and glancing sarcastically about room*). I should imagine not.

PETUNIA. Well, now, don't you let your imagination git away with yeh, Miss What's-yer-name. Lammie Ames ain't rich himself, but he's got mighty high-toned relations back East. He's got an aunt back there some'rs that owns a great big chunk o' land right in the bosom of a city; a chunk so big that it makes a feller's head whizzle to think of it.

HELEN (C.). Indeed? How interesting.

PETUNIA. You bet "indeed"! When Lammie's sister

Mary got married last month her aunt sent her a weddin' dress —— Oh, gosh, but it was swell! (*Steps from behind table to describe dress. Still holding dripping dishcloth in one hand she illustrates against* HELEN'S *dress and hair,* HELEN *meanwhile shrinking from contact with dishcloth.*) It had a satin panel about so wide which run down to a pleat right about here—and the cutest little bunch of white posies right about here—no, I guess that bunch was just about here—and a veil that come 'round to here and then just squshed right out on both sides, like water runnin' out of her ears—oh, it was Star A, number one!

HELEN. Must have been beautiful. I should think this young Ames would go East and live with his aunt.

PETUNIA. I s'pose his aunt don't want him to; and Lammie wouldn't go if she did. He likes the climate out here, and he likes his farm and he likes his mill work ——

HELEN (*wearily*). What does he do in the mill?

PETUNIA. Why, just now he's dogup man.

HELEN. I don't know what that means—dogup man.

PETUNIA (*scornfully*). Don't know what a dogup man means? Why, he fastens the logs together so they can be hauled to the mill. What part of the country did you come from, anyway?

HELEN (*tragically*). From Chicago! Dear old Chicago! Oh, how I long to go back to the lights—to the music—oh, the mad music! Shall I ever hear it again? Shall I ever tango as I have tangoed in the past, from ten at night until five in the morning?

PETUNIA. I've seen that there word, tango, in the "Daily Star" ——

HELEN. And, of course, because you are young you longed to try it.

PETUNIA. Why, no, I can't say as I did. What is it, anyhow?

HELEN. A dance. The most passionately fascinating that has ever been evolved —— (*Takes a few steps.*)

PETUNIA. Oh! I thought it was some kind of a Jap sausage.

HELEN. I will show you how it is done.

(*Business of teaching* PETUNIA *to tango. At end of performance* PETUNIA *goes back to the dishes,* L., *with hand on side, and puffing from exertion.*)

PETUNIA. Say, that's wuss'n mushin' up grade packin' two buckets of brick! I wouldn't want to work at that steady.

HELEN. Nonsense! With Harold Lamar for partner it was heaven—nothing less. (*With a tragic shrug of shoulders and upward movement of palms.*) But I am out of it all forever! I shall never again hear the muffled roar of the dear old streets, or smell the perfume ——

PETUNIA. Say, that's where the stock yards are, ain't it?

HELEN. —— of the flowery parks and the lake—I have thrown it all away! Life is over for me—all the life of the city!

PETUNIA. Well, now, let me put yeh wise: We've got some smells out here, I want to state. You step into the slashin' when the sun gits busy with the down timber—the cedar and the fir —— Say! the sweetness makes yeh ketch your breath! An' not many miles from here there's an ocean that fur smells would make your little old jerkwater lake git down on its knees an' beg, an' that's straight.

HELEN. Oh, but the life ——

PETUNIA. Well, as for the life, we eat an' drink an' sleep an' die an' are born just the same as folks do in Chicago. Wherever there's men an' women an' dogs an' childern an' mules there's life. You don't have to jostle elbows in a city in order to see life. It goes on just about the same everywhere. We've got all kinds of folks, too. I could stand out on that there knoll by the fence an' sling this dish-clout and hit as good a man as walks the airth, or as hard workin' a one, or as lazy a one—an' I ain't hintin' who the last one is, nuther!

HELEN. Is it the owner of this house?

PETUNIA. Not on your photograph! Lammie Ames ain't no shirk!

HELEN. Does your father work in the shingle mill?

PETUNIA. He used to; he handled a cant-hook fur a spell, but he don't work no more. It don't agree with him. He's an inventor.

HELEN. Of what?

PETUNIA. Oh, medicine fur different things—mostly for warts. You take it innerly. It's a perventative.

HELEN. I think you are a good deal interested in this young Ames.

PETUNIA. Who, me? Well, now, you're off your trol-

ley, an' off bad. No sweethearting fur me, I betcher! I know what it leads to.

HELEN (*down* R.). Nothing terrible, to be sure.

PETUNIA. Yes, it does. (*In a solemn hiss.*) It leads to marriage!

HELEN (*laughing*). Is that so terrible?

PETUNIA. You bet! I've seen it—right in our own family. It may be all right fur the men, but it's jest plain misery fur the women. Ask maw! No, sir! I ain't lookin' for no man.

(*Grasps the dish-pan by both handles and carries it to the door up* R. C., *where she heaves its contents over* PRIDE *and* LAMBERT AMES, *who are about to enter.*)

(*Enter* PRIDE *and* AMES, *dripping.*)

AMES. Tunie, how many times have I told you not to heave your dish-water out like that? (PETUNIA *swabs at* AMES *with the dish-towel,* HELEN *helps her angry father. Both girls convulsed with laughter, but trying to hide it from the men.*) What are you doing here, anyhow, Tunie? Where is your mother?

PETUNIA. That Stephen mule kicked maw in the shin an' she's shut down fur one while. And that reminds me I got to hike home an' git supper fur paw an' the boys, or there'll be doin's up to Busher's.

PRIDE (*still brushing and rubbing; to* AMES). If you will be good enough to show my daughter and myself over the house I shall be obliged. The rig is waiting to take us back to the village.

AMES. Certainly. Just a minute, please. (*Peers behind stove.*) Tunie, where's Cat-Betsy?

PETUNIA (*starting guiltily and clapping her palms to her cheeks*). Honest, Lammie, I forgot all about Cat-Betsy. When I started to come over here I shut the hound up, but paw must 'a' let him out. He follered me and treed Cat-Betsy, an' then your dog jumped him an' they had a tussle, an' I got the chain on Shep an' he got away, an' I come in and found you had company, an' ——

PRIDE (L., *interrupting, with watch in hand*). If you will show us the house ——

AMES. Just a minute, please. (*Goes to cupboard and*

pours out a saucer of milk, which he carries to the door.) Kitty, kitty, kitty!

(*Goes out up* R., *followed by* PETUNIA.)

PRIDE. I wonder how long he thinks he can keep us hanging around here? If he doesn't care to rent his house we can look up another, I presume.

HELEN (*mockingly*). Remember, it is the only house with stairs.

PRIDE. I think we might manage without those stairs.

HELEN. It is all horrible! Sordid and horrible!

PRIDE. You have yourself to thank for it. You had it in your power to keep both yourself and me out of it.

HELEN. Father, I couldn't marry that hideous old man! Ugh! The thought of him makes me shudder!

PRIDE. Pooh! It wasn't the fact of his being old which prevented your marrying him. If he had been twenty-four it would have been the same. It was because he wasn't Harold Lamar; that was the reason, miss.

HELEN. Try me with a young rich man and see!

(*Enter* AMES *and* PETUNIA. PRIDE *looks at watch again impatiently.*)

PRIDE. Well, what about the house? We haven't much more time to wait.

AMES. Just a minute. (*Goes to cupboard, from the bottom of which he brings out a plate of bones, explaining.*) For the dog. (*He and* PETUNIA *prepare a tremendous dish of food at table up* L.) Shep is a hearty eater.

(*Carries bones to door, where he whistles.* PRIDE *stamps about impatiently.* HELEN *disgusted.* AMES *goes out, returns with empty plate which he puts on table,* R.)

PRIDE. Really, if you care to rent us your house you must allow us to look it over, and then we must go.

AMES (*opening the stair door*). Well, there are the stairs; help yourselves. No danger of getting lost up there. Walk right up and inspect the chamber. Two beautiful bedrooms, one with a sea view, and the other with a row of hooks upon which to hang your clothes. Perhaps Tunie has time to go up with you and show you 'round.

PETUNIA (*up* L.). Well, now, nix fur yours truly.

Tunie's got to bustle home an' git Dr. James Busher's supper, or he'll be hot-footin' over here all ruffed up like a settin' hen. (*Goes* R. *and puts on hat.*)

PRIDE. Oh, there's nothing to hinder our going up alone, if you don't object.

(*He starts up stairs, turns, gives* HELEN *a hand to assist her to follow, and they scramble up out of sight.*)

PETUNIA (*up* R., *tragically*). Lammie, if they take this house what's to become of Cat-Betsy and the kittens?

AMES (*up* L., *startled by new idea*). Cat-Betsy would go with the house.

PETUNIA (*scornfully*). Huh! I've got a photograph of that young Dotty-Dimple runnin' with a plate of fish for Cat-Betsy, I have!

(AMES *troubled. Sound of arrival without, voice calling "Whoa! Whoa, confound yeh, whoa!" Door opens to admit head of* DR. JAMES BUSHER.)

BUSHER. Hey, Lambert, I've brought Stephen!

AMES. Well, take him to the barn and give him his oats.

(*Enter* BUSHER, *up* R.)

BUSHER. Since when have I become your mule-tender?

AMES. You've had the use of the mule all day, haven't you?

BUSHER. I should say not! He kicked Julia this forenoon about 'leven, and he's stood tied to the fence ever since. In reality, Lambert, you ought to pay me damages, but because of our long-standin' friendship —— (*Stops suddenly and tips chin toward ceiling in listening attitude.*) What's that noise up-stairs? Your house ain't ha'nted, is it, Lambert?

AMES (*up* L.). Mr. Pride, the new man in the mill, and his daughter are up-stairs looking over the chamber. He's thinking of renting the house.

BUSHER (*up* C.). Renting this house? Lambert, I didn't think that of you! Rent your house to a perfect stranger?

AMES. I thought of it.

BUSHER. And you knew that I was lookin' for a house, my family long ago havin' outgrown my present residence. I will rent your house.

AMES. No, you won't! I'm going to rent it to Pride if he wants it.

PETUNIA (*up* R.). Lammie, what will become of Shep if you rent your house to them folks?

AMES (*worried*). Why, Great Gratitude, Tunie, haven't these folks got to keep a dog?

PETUNIA (*coming down* R.). You think that old sour-dough up there will stand fur a dog? Not on your night-cap! And what would you do with Stephen?

AMES. Couldn't your folks keep Stephen?

BUSHER. No, we could not keep Stephen. Stephen ain't fit for a woman to drive. I've got some consideration for my wife. I'm goin' to bone Ole Oleson to lend me his horse. Now, you see, if you were to rent me your place we could take care of your entire menagerie and pay the rent that way.

PETUNIA. And you could board with us. Maw makes corkin' pancakes, an' you've tasted my bread.

AMES (*suddenly making up his mind*). All right. I'll tell this man he can't have the house ——

(*Noise of falling down-stairs.* BUSHER *jumps toward door,* R. *The stair door is burst open and* PRIDE *rolls into the middle of the floor and lies still.* HELEN *shrieks and comes creeping carefully down-stairs backward.*)

HELEN. Your horrid old stairs are dreadful! Are you hurt, papa? (*Bends over her father.*)

PRIDE (*sitting up*). Every bone in my body is broken! Oh, dear! Oh, dear! Is there a doctor anywhere in reach of this forsaken hole?

BUSHER (*shelling out bottles of different sizes from all of his pockets and putting them on the table,* R.). We can fix you up right here and now, mister. (*Goes to* PRIDE *and examines him for injuries. Fingers on* PRIDE'S *leg.*) When I strike a break you yell.

PRIDE. Ouch! Get away, you fool!

BUSHER. Be ca'm, be ca'm. I thought I'd strike something pretty soon. Your leg ain't broke, it's sprained.

PRIDE. And so is my shoulder, and my back, and my elbows!

BUSHER. I dare say. But we'll fix all that in a jiffy. I have something here. (*Shakes villainous-looking bottle.*)

It is the Unsurpassed Golden Wart Elixir, but it is also the most wonderful, all-round do-good that was ever invented. My wife was kicked by a mule this forenoon, but by the judicious use of this concoction she is now up an' gittin' supper. Petunie, you lazy scad, why ain't you home helpin' your maw?

(*Men lift* PRIDE *and put him into a chair down* R. *He groans.* HELEN *goes to him down* R. PETUNIA *goes up* C.)

PRIDE. We shall be obliged to rent this place now. I sha'n't be able to get out of this for months!

HELEN (*down* R., *despairingly*). Those horrid old stairs!

PETUNIA. Poor Cat-Betsy!

AMES (*crossing to* L.). And poor Shep!

PETUNIA (*up* C.). And poor old Stephen!

BUSHER (R.). Now, ain't that just my luck? I've always wanted to live in a house with stairs, and this is the nearest I've ever come to it!

HELEN (*to* AMES). We'll look after your cat. She goes with the house.

AMES. Oh, that will be very good of you.

HELEN. I guess papa broke the stairs.

AMES. I'll fix them up.

HELEN (*smiling*). Thank you. And, if you can, just come over now and then to see things are in order. We're so new to this sort of thing—you know.

(PETUNIA *comes down* C.)

AMES. Oh, yes. I'll keep an eye on the place.

PETUNIA (*to* HELEN). Perhaps you think the man goes with the house, too.

AMES. Tunie ——

PETUNIA (*fiercely, to* HELEN). Well, he don't.

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE.—*Same as Act I.*

(PRIDE *and* HELEN *discovered at rise of curtain playing cards at table,* L. *He is in armchair left of table down* L., *she in kitchen chair at right of table. His leg is bandaged and sticks out stiffly resting on block of wood.*)

HELEN (*yawning*). I wonder if Lambert Ames will go after the mail to-day.

PRIDE. I hope so; I might get a check from Houghton and Hall. But I can't understand why you are so anxious to get mail.

HELEN. Old Shockton might renew his offer of marriage.

PRIDE. You'd turn him down if he did.

HELEN. Would I? Try me! I'd marry the Wizard of Oz if he had money. I don't see what is to become of us.

PRIDE. The mill isn't doing so badly since young Ames has taken hold of it. He understands the running of it better than I do ——

(*Cat mews.*)

HELEN (*throwing down cards and jumping up*). There's that horrid cat again! (*Runs to door,* R.) Scat! Go away!

(*Picks up pebble and throws it out the door. Returns to game. They play.*)

PRIDE (*angrily*). What d'yeh mean by trumping your own trick! (*Cat mews outside the door.* HELEN *jumps up again.*) You don't know whether you are playing cards or pom-pom-pullaway! (HELEN *pouts; they play.*) There you go again!

(*Throws cards at her.* HELEN *jumps up weeping, runs to* R. PRIDE *bumps his chair about until his back is to her with his leg sticking stiffly to* L.)

(*Enter* AMES, *at door up* R.)

AMES (*coming down to* HELEN, *anxiously*). What's this —tears? What is the matter? Poor child, is your father worse?

HELEN (*sobbing*). He—he—isn't worse! He couldn't be worse! He is just as bad as he can be! He—he's just cruel to me!

(*Pops her head down upon* AMES' *shoulder and weeps.* AMES, *not used to women's tears, is visibly affected by her proximity and her emotions. Glares across stage at* PRIDE, *who glares back over his shoulder, then pulls hat over his eyes and sits sullenly with his back to them.*)

AMES (*awkwardly patting* HELEN'S *head*). Well, well; I wouldn't cry.

(*At open door up* R. *appears* PETUNIA, *who carries a long-handled skillet heaped with scraps. She looks in door. Business at sight of tableau.*)

PETUNIA (*very loud*). Kitty, kitty, kitty! (*Enters at door up* R.) Has any one seen anything of Cat-Betsy?

PRIDE (*over his shoulder*). Come here, Helen! (HELEN *crosses to her father.* PETUNIA *and* AMES *exeunt, door up* R.) You're a pretty one—weeping on the shoulder of a shingle-weaver!

HELEN. He isn't a shingle-weaver; he's a dogup man. I couldn't help it, papa. For a moment he looked so like ——

PRIDE. Old Shockton, I presume.

HELEN. Like—like Harold Lamar!

PRIDE. Bah! Harold Lamar! I'm thoroughly disgusted!

HELEN. So am I! You'd no business to bring me out here into the wilds with nobody about but a dogup man! A girl has to have somebody to go on with!

PRIDE. Well, dog your dogup man over here to help get me to bed. I want to take a nap! (*Calls to* AMES.) Hey—you! Come and help my daughter get me into my room.

AMES (*appearing at door up* R. *with* PETUNIA). In a minute. I must look for the cat first. (*Disappears.*)

PETUNIA (*entering and crossing to* L.). Didn't you forgit suthin'? (PRIDE *glares at her superciliously.*) I say—didn't you forgit suthin'?

PRIDE. What do you mean—forget?

PETUNIA. Maw allers taught me to say please, 'specially if I didn't deserve what I was askin' fur.

(*Enter* AMES *with empty skillet, which he gives to* PETUNIA *and goes* L.)

AMES. Now I'll boost you up, Mr. Pride. (*To* HELEN, *tenderly.*) No, no, let me lift the greatest weight. You steady his leg. Petunia, can't you give us a hand?

PETUNIA. Not that anybody knows of! I've got a crick in muh neck! (HELEN *and* AMES *bumpily carry* PRIDE *through the door*, L. PETUNIA, *mimicking.*) Let me lift the heavy part of the load. You steady his head—that's light!

(*Drops the empty skillet, and before it hits the floor kicks it out the door. Noise and exclamations outside. Enter* BUSHER. *He carries the skillet and has other hand pressed to his forehead. Sits down by table*, R., *in a dazed sort of way, takes out much soiled handkerchief, wipes brow and examines handkerchief for blood.*)

BUSHER. Is it swellin'?

PETUNIA (*examining her father's brow*). Naw! It's dirty—that's all. Needs soakin'.

BUSHER. It got soaked just now. Strangest thing ever happened to me in my life. I was walkin' along thinking about my work ——

PETUNIA. About your what?

BUSHER. About my wart preventative—and this here new liniment that I've made—(*taking large bottle from pocket and putting it on table*) when a skillet right out of a clear sky struck me like a thunderbolt—struck me right here. Why, it nearly dazed me fur a minute. (*Picks up skillet and examines it minutely.*) Looks like a perfectly good skillet. (*Hands it to* PETUNIA.) Take it home to your maw and tell her it's a birthday present from me. (PETUNIA *rather sheepishly takes skillet.*) Say, give that here a minute. (*Examines the skillet again.*) Looks like our skillet, but I don't see how it comes to be flyin' round in the air way down here. Ain't been no high wind that I know of. (*Hands it back to* PETUNIA, *regarding her suspiciously.*) Where's the boss?

PETUNIA. Lammie Ames just packed him into the room there. (*Points* L.)

BUSHER. I've brought him some more medicine. (*Takes out another bottle and puts it on the table,* R.) That's Lightning Pain Eradicator. (*Takes out another.*) Neuralgic's Hope. (*Another.*) Golden Bone Soother.

PETUNIA (*uncorking bottles and sniffing each one*). They're all the same, and they're all made outen merlasses an' water, an' you know it, paw.

(BUSHER *makes as if to strike her. She skips to* L. *of stage threatening him with the skillet.*)

BUSHER. Miserable ungrateful little skeezicks! Moses sure knew what he was talkin' about when he said how sharper than an achin' tooth it was to have a thinkless child! (*Takes bottle from table with which to illustrate, and assumes the attitude and tone of a lecturer.*) Don't you know that in every ingrejunt—er—ah—solution, there has to be a body—a platform, so to speak, to build your curative—er—fabrication on? Well, then: That's where your ignorance comes in. (*Enter* AMES, L.) Now I make my remedies on a foundation of merlasses an' water ——

AMES. I guess that's right, Jim; you build your foundation and then you lay a molasses floor and put up a corn syrup house with a maple sugar cupola.

BUSHER (*indignantly loading his bottles into his pocket*). I'd see you die by inches before I'd give you a drop of my medicine!

AMES (C.). I'm willing to take my chances, but if you want a testimonial I will say that I believe your stuff is as good as half the dope that's swallowed.

BUSHER. How is Mr. Pride?

AMES. Better. He's about to the hyena stage now.

BUSHER. Hum-m-m, everything is proceeding satisfactorially then, and just as I had planned.

AMES. You've been reading war bulletins, I see.

BUSHER. I'm just fetchin' him some new medicine.

(*Crosses and knocks at door of room,* L., *and is admitted.* PETUNIA *crosses and goes to door up* R.)

AMES. Wait a minute, Tunie; I've got some good news for you. Miss Pride is going to hire you.

PETUNIA. What fur?

AMES. To help take care of her father.

PETUNIA. I ain't no animal tamer.

AMES. Come on back a minute. What's your hurry?

PETUNIA. I've got to git home. Maw'll be lookin' all over creation an' Eurrup for this skillet.

AMES (*perching on table*, L.). Come over here and sit down. (*Indicates chair*, L.)

PETUNIA (C., *facing audience, holding skillet in front of her in a present arms attitude*). I don't want to set.

AMES. What do you want to do, then?

PETUNIA. I want to stand up here and hold this skillet.

AMES (*provoked*). Well, stand up there and hold your skillet; I don't care, but I want to talk to you about Miss Pride. She's a delicate little thing, and not used to hard work. Not strong, you know.

PETUNIA (*giving him a look of scorn over her shoulder and then bending over the skillet in silent laughter*). Strong! Say! Maw 'n' me are clearin' stump land with your mule, an' that's supposed to be some hard work. Strike a snag once in a while and take a header right up an' over the plough an' land in near the stern end of Stephen—that's the way maw met up with her accident the other day. Maw can stand work like that all right, but she couldn't stand doin' this fur hours on a stretch; nuther could I. (*Illustrates by an exaggerated example of tango as taught her by* HELEN *in Act I, with the skillet as partner.*) It's funny how weak some folks are for work and how strong for dancin'.

AMES (*complainingly*). You don't like Miss Pride.

PETUNIA (*shuddering*). I love her!

AMES (*sighing and musing sentimentally*). I never saw such lovely golden hair.

PETUNIA. It's long.

(*Does a pantomime on the side of winding a hand in long tresses and yanking them unmercifully.*)

AMES. Have you ever seen it down?

PETUNIA. Yep—an' off.

AMES. Eh?

PETUNIA. I said yes! Yeh gittin' deaf, Lammie?

AMES. She's a tender-hearted little thing, don't you think, Tunie?

PETUNIA. Don't ask me; I ain't the one to judge. Ask somebody who depends on her fur victuals—ask Cat-Betsy. Betsy's gittin' to look like a wire rat-trap on legs.

AMES. Petunia, I feel as if I ought to marry and settle down.

PETUNIA. That's too bad considerin' what poor pickin' you've got around here.

AMES. How do you mean—poor picking?

PETUNIA. Well, there's only three grown women in the camp, an' one of them's married. That's maw, an' if she was lucky enough to git out of it this time I don't believe she'd ever chance it agin. But you never can tell. A woman that's made one poor bet is allers hotfoot to stake agin. But maw ain't widdered, so that cuts down the supply to me an' Miss Pride. I wouldn't have you if you was weighted down with diamonds till you was bow-legged—an' Miss Pride wouldn't have you unless you was, so there you are!

AMES. Do you think she is mercenary?

PETUNIA. Eh? Oh, I don't know as she is. She's healthy enough, I guess.

AMES. I mean, do you think she wouldn't marry me unless I was rich?

PETUNIA. Say, I ain't no matrimonial bureau. If you've got a hankering after Miss Pride git in an' rustle. As I understand it any old fizzle of a man can git the woman he wants if he pesters her long enough.

AMES. Even you, Tunie?

PETUNIA (*with her back to him*). Ain't anybody been swarmin' me very hard, as I've noticed.

(*Enter* BUSHER, L.)

BUSHER. Say, Lambert, the boss wants me to go down to the store and git his mail.

AMES. Well, what's to hinder? Guess we're all willing.

BUSHER. What's the matter with my driving Stephen?

(*Sits down* L.)

AMES. Nothing the matter except that Stephen isn't harnessed.

BUSHER. Oh, well, that won't take you long. I'll set here and rest till you bring him round.

AMES (*looking at* BUSHER *a moment, then going* R. *toward door, shaking his head and laughing*). You get my goat!

BUSHER (*lighting pipe*). I don't care for your goat; it's your mule I want just now. I'll bring up your mail, too, Lambert, to pay for the use of the animal.

AMES. You know I never have any mail.

PETUNIA. There might be a letter from Mary.

AMES. That's so. 'Tisn't likely, though; Mary's no hand to write.

(*Exit, up* R.)

PETUNIA. Well, did the old man buy any of your dope?

BUSHER. He did.

PETUNIA. How much did he give yeh?

BUSHER. Fifty cents for a bottle of Bone Easer, and a dollar for the Heart Regulator.

PETUNIA. Got any of that last left?

BUSHER. One bottle. (*Takes bottle from pocket and puts it on table.* PETUNIA *takes bottle from table, looks at it, shakes it up, then drinks it.*) Here! What yeh doin', Petunie?

PETUNIA. Takin' medicine fur muh heart; it's goin' wrong.

BUSHER. Fiddlesticks! What's yer symptoms?

PETUNIA. I feel ugly toward folks that I ain't no business to feel ugly toward. I feel like bitin'!

(*Snaps her teeth at her father.*)

BUSHER (*drawing back*). That ain't heart disease, Petunie; that's hydrophobia!

PETUNIA. An' then all to once I feel as if I'd jest got to beller right out!

(*Turns away and crooks an arm, in which she hides her face and weeps loudly. Sound of wagon outside.* AMES' *voice, "Whoa, Stephen!"*)

(*Enter* AMES *through door,* R. C. *Comes hurriedly down to* PETUNIA.)

AMES. Tunie, what in thunder's the matter?

(*Comes up behind her and attempts to comfort her. She kicks backward at him.*)

PETUNIA. Git away! I don't want yeh anywheres round me!

(*He tries again; she kicks him off.*)

AMES. Busher, you old shim, what have you been saying to make her cry like that? For ten cents I'd knock your head off!

BUSHER (*getting up hastily and starting for door up* R.). I ain't said a single thing—honest I ain't, Lambert! Petunie thinks she's got heart disease, and she's been takin' some of my medicine ——

AMES. Great Scott, you've killed her!

(*Approaches* PETUNIA *once more. Same business.*)

BUSHER. She ain't got any symptoms of heart disease.

AMES (*anxiously*). What are the symptoms of heart disease?

BUSHER (*squaring himself and beginning oracularly*). A disinclination to stir about ——

PETUNIA (*going up* R. *and handing her father the bottle*). Here, paw, you take it yourself; you're pretty bad off.

(*Enter* HELEN, L.)

HELEN. What is the matter? I thought I heard a woman crying.

(PETUNIA, *surreptitiously drying her eyes, motions men not to tell.*)

AMES. Guess it was the wind in the firs. We're liable to have rain soon. Come, Busher, get up steam and start. Stephen's getting restless. Whoa, Stephen!

HELEN. Oh, Mr. Busher, if you are going to the store will you please get this bottle filled with glycerine and rose-water for me, and buy me a copy of "The Ladies' Home Comfort"? And father wants some good cigars, and a porous plaster and some shaving-soap, and some arnica.

BUSHER (*gallantly*). All right, Miss Pride.

AMES. And you might get a box of canned milk and twenty-five pounds of sugar for the cookhouse.

BUSHER. Just as you say, Lambert.

PETUNIA. And—paw—why not git a new pair of shoes for maw with that one-fifty? She needs 'em fierce. Then

I can wear her old ones and Lily can wear mine, and Ann can take Lily's, and Renie can take Ann's, an' Tote Renie's, an' Louise Tote's, an' Nancy Louise's, an' maw can take Nancy's an' cut 'em down for the baby. (*Comes down* R.)

BUSHER. That would be the same as gittin' eight pairs of new shoes! Wha'd'yh think I am, Petunie, a millionaire? Besides, I've got to git some tobacco and a jug of merlasses.

(*Exit through door, and is heard outside getting Stephen under way.*)

HELEN. Father wants to talk to you about the mill, Mr. Ames.

AMES. I'll go right in. (*Goes to door*, L.; *stops with hand on latch.*) I guess I'll have to come and help you with your father, Miss Pride; Petunia can't do it. She isn't strong enough. Her heart's affected.

HELEN (*up* C., *sweetly*). Oh, thank you so much, Mr. Ames; that is so sweet of you.

(PETUNIA, R., *has symptoms on the side again.*)

(*Exit* AMES, L.)

PETUNIA. No, I ain't strong enough. And, besides, I've got to cut hay for the cow and finish gittin' the stumps out o' the breakin'. I can't stand real hard work.

HELEN. I'm so sorry.

PETUNIA. Awh, come out o' the brush! What's the use o' lyin'! You'd a good sight ruther have Lammie help you with the old man than to have me.

HELEN (*demurely*). Well—of course—a man's strength is better than a girl's in a case of this kind.

PETUNIA. Yeah! I guess so. You're the kind that can allers find a man to carry 'em across the muddy spots in life. There's another kind that have to slop right through on their own shanks an' dry their own stockin's afterward. Maw an' me are in that bunch.

HELEN. Petunia, I believe you are jealous of me. I believe you think your sweetheart, Mr. Ames, is falling in love with me.

PETUNIA (*savagely*). He ain't my sweetheart! I tell yeh I never had a sweetheart! I wouldn't have him if he

sweat ten-dollar gold pieces! No sir-ee-bob! Gettin' married is suthin' fierce. I know that by home!

HELEN. Oh, so far as marrying is concerned, neither would I marry Mr. Ames ——

PETUNIA (*with fire*). You don't mean to say you don't think he's good enough fur yeh, do you?

HELEN. Why—of course—he may be good enough ——

PETUNIA. Good enough! You ain't fitten to mend his trousers! He's a gentleman clean plumb through, if he does wear woodsmen's boots and a dickey! He's kind-hearted, he feeds them as is dependent on him, from Stephen right down to the cat! He was allers good to his sister Mary ——

HELEN (*amused*). Why don't you marry him yourself, Petunia?

PETUNIA. They's two reasons: One of 'em I've already told yeh, an' the other is the same reason that keeps a good many girls from marryin' good men—he wouldn't have me. I'm just Jim Busher's girl. He's got his eye on somebody else, and when a man gits pinted in one direction he's jest like a runaway horse—liable to run over anythin' that stands between his startin' an' his stoppin' place!

HELEN (*laughing*). You may be right, Petunia. But never fear; I sha'n't marry Mr. Ames; he's not at all my kind, you know. I wouldn't care to have you tell him I said so, because—well—he has fine eyes, and I like his shoulders—and—dear me, but it's deadly dull with father out here in the woods! (*Sits down* L.)

PETUNIA (*perching on table*, R.). So you're willin' to break a good young feller's heart all to flinders for the sake of passin' away the time while you are up here in the woods?

HELEN. Oh, not quite that, Petunia. But why shouldn't I let him amuse me?

PETUNIA. Do you want me to tell you what I think of that kind of goin' on?

HELEN. You may if you like. Your father won't come with the mail for some time.

PETUNIA (*getting down from the table*). Let me lay this skillet out of my hand. I don't know what I might be tempted to do with it. (*Carries it back and leans it, handle up, against the wall near door.*) There! I won't go off home an' furgit it now. (*Comes down* C. *and squares*

herself in front of HELEN.) I think a girl who could do what you said just now—jest to pass away the time—is a—shim!

HELEN (*rising and backing off*). What is that—a shim?

PETUNIA (*with increasing heat, and approaching* HELEN, *who rises*). A shim's a shingle that's no good. A girl like that is jest fit fur the refuse heap, an' that's all! She belongs in the bonfire at the end of the dump carrier! (*Follows* HELEN *a step at a time during her accusation.*) That's where she belongs, an' that's where she'll git to! She ain't no better'n the man who goes around foolin' girls jest fur his own fun!

HELEN. Petunia ——

PETUNIA. And do you know what I wish on to yeh? I wish that you have to marry a man that you don't care nothin' about except fur his money! And, meantime, I pity the man!

(*Door* L. *opens and* AMES *appears tugging out* PRIDE, *seated in his chair.* AMES *puffing.*)

AMES. He's had his nap and his lunch, and he thinks he wants to get out into the air again! (*As girls rush to help.*) Never—mind—I guess I can—make it.

PETUNIA (*grasping one side of the chair with a jerk*). I guess I wouldn't everlastin'ly break my back, Lammie—(*in a hiss close to his ear*) even fur love!

PRIDE (*stopping them up* C.). Wait a minute. You say the men are all paid from the proceeds of the last carload, and that there are two more cars on the siding being filled?

AMES (*up* L. C.). Yes, Mr. Pride. You needn't fret about the mill; I think we can keep her running all right until you get round again.

HELEN (*down* L., *sweetly*). And it's all owing to your management, Mr. Ames.

PRIDE (*impatiently*). He ought to exert himself. If it hadn't been for his detestable stairs I should have been attending to the mill myself. Hasn't that man Busher come back from the store yet?

AMES. He hasn't had time to get to the store and back yet unless he overdrives Stephen.

PRIDE. I sent him for arnica. Anything to get him and his detestable old bottles of dope out of my sight!

HELEN. Hsh-h-h-h!

PETUNIA (*up* R.). Don't mind me; I've heard folks talk like that before. I've got to go now. Maw'll be pawin' the air fur the skillet.

(*Goes to door, up* R. *Sounds of rapid arrival outside. Stephen being lashed to a wild finish by* BUSHER.)

AMES. Hear that fool drive that mule!

PETUNIA (*cackling*). Hear Lammie make poetry.

(*Enter* BUSHER *at door up* R. C., *loaded with packages. He stumbles over skillet, staggers, catches himself, growling maledictions under his breath.*)

BUSHER (*piling bundles on table,* L., *going back and picking up skillet*). Petunie, ain't you gone home yet with this skillet? (*Comes down* C.)

PETUNIA. Oh, yes, I'm home, an' the skillet's on the stove full of fryin' meat.

BUSHER. What in thunder you hangin' round Ames' house for all the time? Ain't yeh got no pride, girl?

HELEN (*eagerly*). Was there any mail, Mr. Busher?

BUSHER. Yes.

PRIDE. Letters?

BUSHER. No, a letter.

HELEN (*clasping and unclasping her fingers*). Was—was the—the letter for me, Mr. Busher?

BUSHER (*putting bottle on table,* L.). There's the arnica —— (*Goes back toward door.*) Whoa, Stephen! (*Returns to table,* L.) And there's the plaster; and there's the rose-water —— (*Puts articles on table.*)

HELEN (*impatiently*). The letter! The letter, please!

BUSHER (C., *to* PETUNIA). Go put that skillet into the wagon. I'm goin' to drive over home with our things.

PETUNIA (*up* R., *hopefully*). Did yeh git maw's shoes?

BUSHER (*coming down* R.). No, didn't have money enough left. Got the merlasses and the tobacco.

(PETUNIA *disappointed.*)

PRIDE. Come, come—dig up the letter and get us out of our suspense!

(BUSHER, *having entirely unburdened himself, sits down near table,* R., *deliberately puts hand in right coat pocket, then left pocket, stretches right leg in order to search right-hand pocket, then left the same; looks dazed.*)

BUSHER. Petunie, go see if I dropped that there letter in the wagon.

(*Exit* PETUNIA, *door up* R. BUSHER *goes through pocket business all over again.*)

PRIDE. I think you might have used a little care!

HELEN. Abominable! Can't you remember whether the letter was for me or not?

(*Enter* PETUNIA, R. C.)

PETUNIA. 'Tain't in the wagon.

PRIDE. You had better drive the mule back along the road. You will probably find the letter.

BUSHER. Well—after I've had my supper.

HELEN. Then it will be too late! Some one else will have picked it up!

(PETUNIA *and* AMES *look out the door for the letter.* BUSHER *takes off hat, leaving the letter in plain sight on the top of his head while he wipes the inside of hat with handkerchief.*)

BUSHER. Funniest thing! I'd 'a' sworn I put that letter ——

(HELEN, PETUNIA *and* AMES *see the letter simultaneously. They swoop down upon him. Business.* HELEN *gets letter, reads superscription.*)

HELEN. "Mr. Lambert Ames"! Oh, I'm so disappointed!

PRIDE (*with a groan*). I was in hopes it was good news from Houghton and Hall.

AMES. For me? It must be from Mary. (*Comes down* C., *takes letter, gazes at it in bewilderment for some time.*) It's from my Buffalo aunt.

HELEN (*down* L. C.). Your rich aunt?

PETUNIA (*down* R. C.). I didn't know your aunt was a buffalo.

BUSHER (*down* R.). If she has sent him money it's up to him to treat, eh, Pride? (*Adjusts glasses and peers over* AMES' *shoulder.*) It's from Buffalo, all right.

(BUSHER *goes to extreme* R. AMES *goes* R. *Sits in chair vacated by* BUSHER *and deliberately takes out pocket-knife with which to open letter.* PETUNIA *picks up skillet and goes up* C. HELEN *about to exit,* L. AMES *unfolds letter.* BUSHER *still adjusting glasses and trying to read over* AMES' *right shoulder.* PRIDE *nursing his bandages up* C.)

AMES (*rising in sudden excitement*). It's from my aunt!

PRIDE (*hitching his chair down* L. C.). You told us that before.

AMES. She's dead!

BUSHER. Dead!

HELEN. How can it be from your aunt if she's ——

AMES (*down* R. C.). She's left me two hundred thousand dollars!

(PETUNIA *staggers against the door up* C., *and as she spreads out her arms the skillet clatters to the floor.*)

PRIDE (*forgetting his breakages, hobbles down* L., *shouting*). Two hundred thousand dollars! Two hundred thousand dollars!

HELEN (*extreme* L.). Oh, Mr. Ames, what good fortune! How happy I am for you.

(PETUNIA *takes a step or two down* C.)

AMES. Thank you. I—can't—quite realize it yet. (*Suddenly turns to* PETUNIA.) Tunie, girl, I'm a rich man. What do you think of that? (*He holds out the letter to her.* PETUNIA *takes it from him mechanically, then suddenly throws it fiercely on the floor, stamps on it, covers her face with her hands, bursts into tears, and runs out up* R. C. AMES *runs up to door after her, calling.*) Tunie! Tunie!

(HELEN *laughs lightly.*)

CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE.—*Same as Act I. Cot bed* R. *instead of table down* L.

(AMES *discovered sitting with feet stretched out in front of him, hands in pockets and an unhappy scowl upon his face. Enter* PRIDE, *up* R. C., *walking with a cane but briskly.*)

PRIDE. Well, Lambert, I've just been down to the mill. Everything going on splendidly. I see you have your rig at the door; were you driving to the store? If so I should like to ride down with you ——

AMES (*eagerly*). All right, Mr. Pride, you take the mule, and I won't have to go.

PRIDE. Certainly, if you wish, dear boy. Where is Helen?

AMES. She's up-stairs getting ready to go to the store.

PRIDE. Oh, you were intending to drive her down?

AMES. No, I was intending to drive Stephen, but Miss Pride was going with me.

PRIDE. Certainly! Certainly, the drive will do you good, and you can, if you will, do my errand.

AMES. I was only going to accommodate Miss Pride. I didn't want to go. I've got some work to do out at the hen-house—fix a window and make some new nest-boxes. I've been neglecting my hens; they're not laying as they should at this time of the year.

PRIDE. Suit yourself, Lambert, although I'm afraid a certain young lady will be somewhat disappointed. And—really, you know, it can't make very much difference to you—now—whether the hens lay or not. A dozen eggs a day is a small matter. In fact, you'll be selling your little place here, I presume.

AMES. I don't know. Where should I go if I should sell this place?

PRIDE. Why, my dear fellow, you would go where you could enjoy life—see something of the world and its ways. You would go to Chicago—New York—Europe ——

AMES (*impatiently*). I see more life right here and now than I can understand.

PRIDE. You must remember that a man with as much money as you now have owes something to society. He must make himself a place in the world; build a reasonable and decent home; marry a wife who is fitted by education and bearing to grace such a home; he ought to dress like a gentleman ——

AMES (*interrupting*). Speaking of dress, Mr. Pride, did you or your daughter see anything of my other boots? When I bought these new ones yesterday I thought I left the old ones in the house here somewhere.

PRIDE. You did. You left them sprawling on a chair. Helen picked them up when she was tidying the room and asked me to put them away. I knew you would never use them any more, so I carried them down and threw them on the refuse heap ——

AMES. To burn up? Perfectly good boots? Why, there was a year's wear in those boots!

(*Takes hat from nail and starts for door.*)

PRIDE (*apologetically*). Awfully sorry, Lambert. I wouldn't for the world have meddled with your belongings if I had dreamed you would ever want the boots again. But I sort of considered them—your chrysalis, so to speak.

AMES (*repressing his anger*). Oh, well—never mind. It's all right. Maybe you didn't get them into the fire. I'll go right away and see if there's anything left of them.

(*Exit up* R. C. *As he goes out* HELEN *opens stair door. Is discovered on third step from bottom coming down backwards.*)

HELEN (*reaching floor*). Horrible stairs! (*Looks about.*) I'm ready at last. Oh, you here, papa? Where is Lambert?

PRIDE. Gone to look after his chrysalis. His butterfly wings don't seem to be drying out and unfolding to any great extent. Well, what progress have you made? You've had a week. You should have been engaged by this time. Are you going to let him slip through your fingers, as you did old Shockton?

HELEN. I can't force him to engage himself to me, can I? (*Almost weeping.*)

PRIDE. You didn't seem to have any trouble fascinating him when he was poor. You wept on his shoulder, I remember. I tell you, Helen, we must get hold of some of this money!

HELEN (*down* L. C.). You've already gotten hold of some of it, haven't you? Hasn't he promised to finance the shingle mill?

PRIDE (*down* L.). Rot! What does that amount to? We want the fortune in the family! Hasn't he melted toward you at all?

HELEN. Not to speak of. He lets me call him Lambert.

PRIDE. Exceedingly condescending! And he calls you Helen, I presume?

HELEN. No, he prefers to call me Miss Pride. Sometimes I think he's in love with that girl of Busher's.

PRIDE. Possible, but not probable. (*Knock at door up* R. C.) Come in.

(*Enter* BUSHER, *carrying a sizable bundle done up in newspaper.*)

BUSHER. I should like to speak to Mr. Lambert Ames.

PRIDE (*brusquely*). Well, you see, I presume that he isn't here.

BUSHER. He can't be very far away; I see his mule hitched out here.

PRIDE. My daughter and I are about to drive down to the store.

BUSHER (*coming down* R.). Taking your pleasure rides and your good times with no thought of other people's sorrows!

HELEN. Dear me, Mr. Busher, what is the matter?

BUSHER (*melodramatically*). Can a father stand by an' see his own chi-e-ld chr-r-u-shed to earth, never to rise again, yet say nothing? (*To* PRIDE.) I ask you—you who are yourself a parent—can he?

PRIDE (*briskly*). I don't catch your drift.

BUSHER. My daughter is a broken-hearted maiden, sir! And this young two-hundred-thousand-dollar gentleman is the breaker! The proof of his perfidy is right there in this bundle, sir! Yes, sir! In this here bundle, sir! I'm a-gonto sue him fur—ah—ah—alienatin' the affections of my girl, sir! He's a deep-dyed villain an' I'm a-gonto prove it in a court of law!

PRIDE. Nonsense, Busher, don't make a fool of yourself. You can't do anything with Ames. He has money, and you haven't. And, besides, can't you see, Busher, that the fact of Ames coming into this fortune makes any thought of marriage with your girl impossible? Ames must choose a wife who will be a credit to him.

BUSHER. He must, must he? Very well, then he must pay fur the privilege!

PRIDE (*to* HELEN). Did you ever know of Ames making love to this girl?

HELEN. I never knew of his making love to any girl. I don't think he is capable of making love.

BUSHER. He has engaged my daughter's affections, an' I have the proof right there in that bundle. And to think how I've been a father to those Ames children, both Mary an' Lambert! I've doctored 'em in sickness and in health! Through my ministrations neither one of 'em has ever had a wart—and now in my old age an' penury—and them with two hundred thousand dollars—an' livin' in the best house in the neighborhood, a house that I designed ——

HELEN. Did you design the stairs, Mr. Busher?

BUSHER. I did.

HELEN. For pity's sake why did you make them so perpendicular, and with such horrid shallow treads?

BUSHER. Madam, you see if I hadn't made the stairs straight up and down with narrow treads they would have stuck out of that upper window about eight feet. Then when you got to the top of the stairs instead of bein' on your way to bed you'd 'a' found yourself outdoors in the upper branches of an apple tree. See? It takes a good deal of practical skill to design stairs, let me tell yeh. Yes, I designed them stairs, and now look what pay I'm gittin' for it!

PRIDE. I don't think anything which could possibly happen to you would pay you for having built that flight of stairs! They can't really be called a flight of stairs; they're a shot of stairs! Come, Helen, if we are going to the store we must start.

(*Enter* AMES, *up* R. C.)

AMES (*over his shoulder*). Whoa, Stephen! Behave yourself! (*To* PRIDE.) He's—getting pretty restless, Mr. Pride. (*Comes down* C.) . He always did hate waiting at a hitching-post. (*Exit up* R. C., PRIDE *and* HELEN, *she*

with a winning backward smile at AMES.) I think I'd better see you under way.

(*Exit up* R. C., *after* PRIDE *and* HELEN. BUSHER *goes* L., *strikes attitude, clears his throat, and begins his rehearsal.*)

BUSHER. I have come for an explanation! (*The beginning does not suit him. Puts bundle under other arm, clears throat again, assumes threatening attitude. Relinquishes it to change position of his feet. Begins again.*) I have come to demand justice for my wronged child!

(*Is pleased with the phrasing, repeats the sentence.*)

(*Enter* AMES, *who looks eagerly about the room.*)

AMES. Who are you talking to, Busher? I thought Tunie was here. Where is she, Busher? I haven't had a slant at her since the blow fell.

BUSHER (*business with attitude and getting bundle just right*). I have come to demand justice ——

AMES. Sit down, sit down, Jim; you never could talk standing up. What's the idea? And before you begin I want to ask again what's become of Tunie? I'm homesick to see her. I've been over to your house four times, but she has always been away ——

BUSHER. You're a good one to talk about my girl—after breakin' her heart ——

AMES (*coming down* C.). What are you raving about now?

BUSHER. You've broken her heart!

AMES. I?

BUSHER. Yes, sir, you! an' you're a-gonto pay for it in the law courts! Understand you'll find out that you can't trifle with a young girl's feelin's, an' then because you git a little money run off an' marry the mill boss's daughter! No, sir! Not with old Doc. Busher at the saw!

AMES. Who said I was going to marry the boss's daughter?

BUSHER. Everybody says so.

AMES. Well, everybody's mistaken—I'm not. (BUSHER *rises.*) Sit down! Sit down! You can't think standing

up. (BUSHER *sits*, L.) Now, what's to pay about Tunie? I want to see Tunie; there are two or three things I want to tell her ——

BUSHER. You'll never see Petunie Busher again! She's gone to the city to work out!

AMES (*eagerly*). Did she say it was on my account?

BUSHER. No, she said it was on my account. She said she an' her maw an' the children didn't have enough to eat, but that of course was an excuse ——

AMES. Did she mention me at all?

BUSHER (*rising*). She did.

AMES (*savagely*). Sit down, I tell you, and give me the whole output. What did Tunie say about me?

(BUSHER *sits*, L.)

BUSHER. Said she couldn't bear the sight of you, but ——

AMES. Just as I expected. What brought out the remark? I suppose you were urging her to make up to me now that I have money!

BUSHER. I merely said ——

AMES. Never mind—I see it all! You've just naturally disgusted the girl with your tommyrot! Tunie's not the girl to hanker after a fellow's money—nor after the fellow himself ——

BUSHER. Petunie is passionately in love with you!

AMES. Eh? If you can prove that I'll marry her by force! I like Tunie better than anybody on earth ——

BUSHER (*jubilant, jumping up and coming toward* AMES, *who wards him off*). My dear boy ——

AMES. Keep off! Keep off! There is only one improvement I could ask for in Tunie—if I am to marry her ——

BUSHER. What's that, Lambert? What improvement is that? By gracious, it shall be made. I'll see to it myself!

AMES. Tunie would be about perfect in my eyes if she was an orphan on her father's side.

BUSHER. Ha, ha! You will have your joke, won't you?

AMES. I'm not joking; but go on with your story. How do you know Tunie cares for me?

BUSHER. Well, first thing I knew Petunie had her bag packed and was going. I tried to stop her, but it was no

go; she had the skids under her for the city. I says, "You big dummy, to blow just as a millionaire has broke out in the neighborhood." I says, "What's a-taking you, anyhow?" I says, "Why don't you have a whack at marrying Lambert Ames——"

AMES. And I know just exactly what she said. She said she wouldn't marry me if I were hung ten feet thick with diamonds,—I've heard that before—and I don't believe she would, either!

BUSHER (*rising*). Well, she did say something of that sort, but—she packed a love token of yourn with her things. (*Puts bundle on table,* L., *and begins to untie it.*) I opened her baggage to see what she had in it to make it bulge so——

AMES. A love token? Something I had given her?

BUSHER (*still struggling with the string around the bundle*). No, something she found. I went down to the refuse burner yes't'dy and there I found a perfectly good pair of boots, an' I picked 'em up an' took 'em home.

(*He draws the boots from the paper and holds them up.*)

AMES. Tunie was carrying off my boots?

BUSHER. To remember you by.

AMES (*taking the boots*). Bless her heart! Busher, do you honestly think she cares for me that way?

BUSHER (*delightedly*). Certainly she does.

AMES. Why in thunder, then, did she always make out she didn't care a whoop for me?

BUSHER. Lambert, you don't know much about the female sect. I've had Julia tell me to my face that she wished to God she'd never married me!

AMES (*putting boots under the cot,* R.). Where is Tunie now?

BUSHER. Down to the mill waitin' for the loggin' train to come up.

AMES (*starting for the door*). I want to talk with her——

BUSHER (*catching him by the coat-tails*). Hold back! Whoa! She won't listen to a two-hundred-thousand-dollar gink! Petunie's got to be approached, not through pride or avarice, but through sympathy—see? Now, if you can manage to fall down-stairs an' break your leg—dislocate

your shoulder as old Pride did—knock out your teeth, bung out one eye ——

(AMES *jerks a sheet from cot-bed and begins to tear it into bandages. Thrusts strips into* BUSHER'S *hands.*)

AMES. All right. Here, tie me up, and be quick about it! Then run to the mill —— (*Looks at watch.*) Twenty minutes before the logging train is due! (*Takes off coat.*) Tell Tunie I've lost all my money ——

(BUSHER *begins turning* AMES *into a pitiable wreck. Bandages head, leg, arm in sling, etc.* AMES *lies on cot,* R.)

(*Enter* PRIDE *and* HELEN, *the former carrying the mail, packages, etc.*)

HELEN (*in alarm*). Good heavens—what is the matter?

(*Runs to* AMES. BUSHER *wards her off.*)

BUSHER. Keep away! Don't excite him! There's been a horrible accident—fell down-stairs—smashed himself to flinders! One leg's got to come off, and I don't know but both!

(AMES *groans.*)

HELEN. Horrors!

BUSHER. Yes, that's what I say—horrors—but it can't be helped now!

PRIDE (*coming down* L., *and throwing mail on table*). Those confounded stairs again!

BUSHER (*crossing* L. *and picking up letter from table*). What's this, a letter for Lambert? I'll have to read it. (*Goes* R., *breaks seal, reads.*) Great Catacombs! Trouble never comes singly! There's been a mistake! The—er—old lady left all the money to Lambert's cousin instead of to Lambert! Similarity of names caused the mistake—lawyers got the name mixed! Be ca'm, Lambert, my boy—be ca'm! (*As* HELEN *turns to her father,* BUSHER *kicks* AMES.) Groan or something! You're just maimed and beggared—you ain't dead! (AMES *groans.*) Mr. Pride, would you be willing to drive the mule down to the mill after my girl, Petunie?

PRIDE (*arrogantly*). I've been errand boy for this establishment quite enough for one day. I have some business

of my own to attend to. What's the imperative need for your daughter's presence, anyway?

HELEN. I'll go.

PRIDE. You'll do nothing of the sort! You couldn't drive that mule. You know how he acted just now on the way home.

HELEN. I'll go on foot for Petunia, then. We must certainly have some one to help do the work here now—with another wreck in the house.

(AMES *groans.* *Exit* HELEN, *up* R. C.)

BUSHER. Have you unharnessed Stephen?

PRIDE. No, and what's more, I don't intend to unharness Stephen. I shall need what few brains I have to run the shingle mill now that Ames is off the turf. (*Goes up* R., *hangs up coat and hat and goes to cupboard up* C. *Searches shelves, high and low, hungrily.*) I wish some one would do a little cooking in this house. I'm as hungry as a wolf!

AMES (*hopefully*). Tunie will slap up some biscuit when she comes. I'm starved myself—— (BUSHER *kicks him on the side and* AMES *adds hastily.*) It's the death appetite, I'm afraid.

BUSHER (*to* PRIDE). You'd better bring in an armful of wood and git the fire under way against Petunie's coming.

PRIDE (*glaring at him*). I'll go hungry first!

(*Comes down* L.)

BUSHER. All right, go hungry, then. It serves you right. If there's anything I despise it's laziness!

(AMES *snickers.* BUSHER *pinches him; he groans.* PETUNIA *comes flying in up* R. C. *followed by* HELEN.)

PETUNIA (*rushing to* AMES). Why, Lammie, you poor old Siwash, what luck you're a-havin'! Ain't it rotten?

(HELEN *comes down* L. C.)

AMES (*groaning*). I don't know what's to become of me, Tunie—nobody to care whether I live or die!

(BUSHER *goes up* C.)

PETUNIA. Awh, now you're away out in the brush! I care, and I'm goin' to stand right by with the cant-hook! You git me? (*Sits on floor by* AMES.)

AMES. Tunie, you can't take care of me unless ——

PETUNIA. Unless what, Lammie?

AMES. Unless we are married.

BUSHER (*briskly*). What d'yeh say, Petunie? You say yes, of course. (*Comes down* R. C. *to her.*) You must be careful—any sudden jar or disappointment ——

PETUNIA (*rising*). What—me in the holy bonds of padlock? Oh, I can't—I won't. I said I wouldn't. Are you dead sure, Lammie, that you want to marry me?

AMES. Oh, dead sure, Tunie. So sure that when I was in town the other day I got a marriage license for you and me, hoping something lucky might turn up, and you see it has.

(*Sits up and starts to put hand in pocket;* BUSHER *restrains him.*)

BUSHER. Don't do that! Don't do that—d'want to break your arm right off? Here, let me git it.

(*Fishes in* AMES' *pocket, produces paper, which he examines with delight.*)

AMES. As I told your father when I asked him if I might speak to you, I'm perfectly sure about wishing to be a husband. The thing which stuck in my craw was being a—ha!—forgive me, Tunie—a son-in-law!

PETUNIA. Yes—well—that's just it. I ain't no hand to go back on my kin. You'd have to be a son-in-law to paw and brother-in-law to the boys, and to Lily, Ann, Renie, Tote, Louise an' Nancy. No, sir. It would make yours truly do some swift skatin' 'round to support the hull bunch.

AMES. Don't you think you can do it, Tunie? Please.

PETUNIA. Oh, I could do it. I'm a tough little cayuse. I guess under the whup I could start the load. I suppose I could git some washin' to take in—to do while I'm restin', you know. Oh, I could do it—but will I?

BUSHER. Aw, quit yer foolin', Petunie. As Justice of the Peace, I'll marry you myself. I'll git yer maw.

(*Starts for door, but stops when* HELEN *speaks.*)

HELEN (L. C.). Really, you'd better take him, Petunia, and I might as well tell you now I am going to be married soon myself.

PETUNIA. What!

PRIDE (*down* L.). Helen, what do you mean?

HELEN. Yes, papa, I got the letter to-day.

PETUNIA (*standing near cot*, R.). Oh, dear me, that rich old soak? Don't yeh do it! I wished it on yeh, but I take it back. I do. If you must get married,—marry for love.

HELEN. That's exactly what I'm goin' to do. You hear, father? Harold Lamar is poor, but he wants me, and I'm going to marry him in spite of everybody.

PETUNIA (*going to* HELEN). Good girl. (*Kisses her.*) That's the talk. If I loved a man, an' he loved me, nothin' could come between us—nothin'.

AMES. Tunie.

PETUNIA (*her face turned away from him*). What?

(AMES *draws the boots from under the cot and holds them up.*)

AMES. Tunie, look here.

(PETUNIA *turns and sees the boots. She rushes to seize them.*)

PETUNIA. Why, Lammie Ames, where'd you git them boots? I ——

AMES (*drawing her down beside the cot*). Oh, Tunie, Tunie, can you still say you don't love me?

PETUNIA. Yes. (*He draws her closer to him.*) No. Oh, Lammie Ames, you good-for-nothin' ——

(*She buries her face on his shoulder.*)

AMES. Well, I guess that's settled, then.

BUSHER. Hurray! I'll go over now an' git Julia and the children. We'll all move right in with you, I think, Lambert.

(AMES *shakes his head, laughing. Exit* BUSHER *up* R. C.)

AMES. We'll see about that. (*To* PRIDE.) Has Stephen been unhitched and fed?

PRIDE. Not being stable boy, I can't say.

PETUNIA (*rising*). I'll see to Stephen, Lammie. Now don't git your blood all het up.

AMES. No, you won't. You're not Busher's girl now. You're my girl. (*Springs up suddenly, goes* L., *and grasps* PRIDE *by the back of the collar.*) You old rascal! (*Girls*

both cry out.) There, I toted you in and dragged you out when you were all broken up, and now when I've had the same misfortune you stand on your dignity and let a poor old faithful animal go without his feed and water! (*Drags him to door up* R. C., *opens it and heaves him out.*) Now you unhitch that mule and feed him! I think I'm going to be well enough to tend to the hens and the dog myself!

PETUNIA (*down* R., *indignantly*). Lammie Ames, you old water-soaked cull! You been lyin' to me?

AMES (*coming down* R. C. *and throwing off bandages*). No, Tunie, your father understands that business better than I. He did the lying for me.

HELEN (L.). And haven't you lost your money after all?

AMES (*down* R. C., *grinning sheepishly at her as he unwinds his bandages*). My—er—money?

PETUNIA. Ain't yeh, Lammie? Ain't yeh? You own up, now!

AMES. We shall have enough left for a few luxuries. For instance, we'll carpet the stairs, and let Cat-Betsy keep all her kittens ——

(*Back door opens to admit* BUSHER, *three or four boys*, LILY, ANN, RENIE, TOTE, LOUISE *and* NANCY, *and* MRS. BUSHER *bearing a baby in her arms. Each Busher bears some article of household furniture, the more bulky and ridiculous the better. They fill the stage.* AMES, *laughing, takes* PETUNIA *in his arms and kisses her.*)

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